2

FRANCESCO VETTORI

Letter to Niccolò Machiavelli

November 23, 1513

On March 11, 1513, Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici became the first Florentine ever elected as pope, and he chose the name Leo X. The Medici family thus controlled simultaneously the papacy and the government of

---

Machiavelli, *Lettere*, ed. Gaeta, in Machiavelli, *Opere*, 3: 419–23. Translated from the Italian by William J. Connell.

Florence. In conjunction with the festivities in Florence, the government announced a pardon of prisoners. Machiavelli, who a few weeks before had been accused of participating in a plot against the Medici, arrested, tortured, and imprisoned indefinitely, was suddenly freed. Only the terms imposed on November 10, 1512, when Machiavelli lost his chancery job, remained in effect, and one of these required that Machiavelli remain within Florentine jurisdiction for one year, with three citizens pledged to pay the enormous sum of 1,000 florins in the event that Machiavelli were to flee during that time. One of the three guarantors was Machiavelli's good friend Francesco Vettori, also a friend of the Medici family, who had been appointed as Florence's ambassador to the papal court. After Machiavelli's release from prison, he and Vettori began an intense exchange of letters. They discussed the international situation, the prospect that Machiavelli might find employment with the Medici, and their personal affairs and mutual friends. The correspondence broke off at the end of August 1513, when Vettori failed to reply to a letter of Machiavelli's. But the prohibition on Machiavelli's travel expired on November 10, and Machiavelli's friends inserted a signal in a chancery letter of November 12 to tip off Vettori to the fact that his friend was now in the clear, and that Vettori need no longer worry about the pledge he had made.[1]

With this letter of November 23 Vettori now resumed the correspondence, describing at length his situation in Rome. He did not fail to include a warm invitation to Machiavelli to stay with him in Rome.

To the honorable man, Niccolò di Messer Bernardo Machiavelli. In Florence.

My dear *compare*:[2] I have practiced toward you[3] such "sobriety of the pen," as Cristofano Sernigi says, that it slipped my mind where I was. If I remember rightly, the last letter I had from you began with the story of the lion and the fox.[4] I looked for it a little among my letters, but when I

[1] On the circumstances of the correspondence and the communication to Vettori that the travel ban had expired, see William J. Connell, "New Light on Machiavelli's Letter to Vettori, 10 December 1513," in *Europa e Italia: studi in onore di Giorgio Chittolini / Europe and Italy: Studies in Honour of Giorgio Chittolini* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2011), 93–127.

[2] The word *compare* (co-father) is used in Italian when addressing a man who has stood as godfather to one's own child, or whose child is one's godchild.

[3] *voi*: used throughout.

[4] M's letter was dated August 26, 1513. The allusion is to one of *Aesop's Fables*, in which a fox is first frightened by a lion, then takes courage, then approaches the lion and converses with it.

could not find it right away I decided not to look anymore. For in truth I did not reply to you then because I worried that to me and you might happen what once happened to me and Panzano:[5] we began playing with cards that were old and worn out, so we sent for new ones, but by the time the servant returned with these one of us had lost his money. Similarly, we were speaking about getting princes to come to terms, but all along they were still playing, so I worried that while we were using up letters about getting them to come to terms one of them might lose his money. And after we stopped writing certain things have been seen to happen; furthermore, the party is not over, although it seems to have stopped for a while, and I believe it is good not to speak about the party until it is done.

In this letter I have decided to write to tell you how my life in Rome is. It seems fitting, first things first, to let you know where I live, because I have moved, and I am no longer near so many courtesans as I was this summer. My lodging is in a place called San Michele in Borgo,[6] which is very close to the palace and piazza of St. Peter's. But it is in a place that is a little solitary, because it is towards the hill the ancients called the Janiculum. The house is very good, and has many apartments, although small ones; and it is open to the north wind, so there is a perfect breeze.

From the house one enters the church, which, because I am a religious person, as you know, is quite useful for me. It is true that the church is used more for walking through than for anything else, because mass is never said there, nor any other divine office, save once in the whole year. From the church one enters a garden that once was clean and beautiful but now is ruined in large part, although it is continually being repaired. From the garden one climbs up the Janiculum hill, where one can go for pleasure among the paths and vineyards without being seen by anyone. And in this place, according to the ancients, were the gardens of Nero, of which one sees the remains. In this house I have nine servants, and in addition to them I have Il Brancaccio,[7] a chaplain, a scribe, and seven horses, and I spend liberally all of my salary. In the beginning, when I arrived, I started by wanting to live in splendor and refinement, inviting outsiders, serving three or four courses, eating with silver and similar things. Then I realized that I was spending too much and was no better off, so I decided to invite no one and to live at a good, ordinary rate. The silver plate I gave back to the people who had loaned it to me, both so

[5] Fruosino da Panzano, also mentioned in Document 3.
[6] The church is now known as SS. Michele e Magno, in Borgo Santo Spirito.
[7] Giuliano Brancacci of Florence.

I wouldn't have to look after it, and also because they often asked me to speak with Our Holiness concerning some request of theirs. I would do it, but their request was not met, so I determined to rid myself of the business, giving the bother and blame to no one so that they could not be imputed to me.

In the morning, in this season, I rise at nine o'clock, and when I am dressed I go to the palace; not every morning, that is, but once every two or three days. Here, sometimes, I say twenty words to the Pope, ten to Cardinal de' Medici,[8] six to the magnificent Giuliano[9] (and if I cannot speak with him, I speak with Piero Ardinghelli[10]), and then I speak with whatever ambassador happens to be in those chambers. I learn some small thing, albeit of little importance. Having done this, I return home, save that sometimes I lunch with Cardinal de' Medici. Once back, I eat with my own people, and, sometimes, one or two outsiders who come on their own, say Ser Sano, or that Ser Tommaso who was in Trent, Giovanni Rucellai or Giovanni Girolami. After eating I play cards, if I have someone to do it with, but if I don't have anyone, I walk through the church and the garden. Then I ride a little bit outside of Rome, when the weather is fine. At night I return home; and I have arranged to have many history books here, especially by Roman writers, which is to say Livy, with the epitome by Lucius Florus, Sallust, Plutarch, Appian of Alexandria, Cornelius Tacitus, Suetonius, Lampridius and Spartianus, and those others who wrote about the emperors: Herodian, Ammianus Marcellinus and Procopius. And with these I pass my time. I consider what emperors this poor Rome, who once caused the world to tremble, has suffered, and reflect that it is no great wonder that Rome could further tolerate two pontiffs of the kind that these last ones were. I write a letter once every four days to my lords the Ten,[11] and I tell some weary news of no importance, since I have nothing else to write for the reasons that you yourself understand. Then I go off to sleep, after I have dined and share some short story with Brancaccio and Messer Giovambatista Nasi, who often stays with me. On feast-days I hear mass, and I do not do as you, who often skip it. If you were to ask me whether I have any courtesan, I should reply that at the

[8] Giulio de' Medici (1478–1534), archbishop of Florence and illegitimate son of Giuliano di Piero de' Medici, was elevated to cardinal by Pope Leo X on September 23, 1513. In 1523 he was elected Pope Clement VII.

[9] Giuliano de' Medici (1479–1516) was the younger brother of Pope Leo X.

[10] Piero di Niccolò Ardinghelli (1470–1526) of Florence was the secretary of Pope Leo X. He is also mentioned in Document 3.

[11] The Ten of Liberty and Peace was the Florentine magistracy in charge of military and foreign affairs.

start, when I arrived, I had some, as I wrote you. Then, frightened by the summer's air, I abstained. Nonetheless, I spoiled one of them, so that often she comes all by herself. She is quite reasonably beautiful, and her speech is charming. I have also in this place, although it is solitary, a neighbor woman who would not displease you, and although she is of noble family, she does business on the side.

My Niccolò, I invite you to share this life! If you come here you will give me great pleasure, and then we shall return back there[12] together. Here you will have no other business save to go about sightseeing, then come home, trade jokes and laugh. Nor do I want you to believe that I live like an ambassador, for I wanted always to be a free man. I dress sometimes in long robes and sometimes short ones; I ride alone, sometimes with servants on foot, and sometimes with them on horseback. I never go to the houses of cardinals because I have none to visit, except Medici[13] and sometimes Bibbiena[14] when he is healthy. Let everyone say what they like: if I don't satisfy them, let them recall me. For, in the end, I want to go home after a year and to have made some money after selling my robes and horses, and, if possible, I don't want to spend any of my own.

And I want you to believe this one thing for me, and I say it without flattery. Although I haven't labored much here, nonetheless the commotion is so great that one can't help but have dealings with very many men. In reality few of them satisfy me, and I have found no man of better judgment than yourself. "But we are dragged along by the fates."[15] So that when I speak at length to certain persons, when I read their letters, I wonder to myself that they have achieved any rank at all, since their speech and letters are nothing but ceremonious displays, lies, and fables, and there are few of them who rise above mediocrity. Bernardo of Bibbiena, who is now a cardinal, has in truth a noble genius, and he is a man both facetious and discreet, and in his time he exerted himself in great labors. Nonetheless, now he is ill; he has been this way for three months, and I do not know whether he will again be what he once was. Often we exert ourselves in order to relax, but it doesn't work. For this reason, therefore, let's be happy, come what may. Remember that I am at your pleasure, and that I commend myself to you, to Filippo and

[12] To Florence.

[13] Cardinal Giulio de' Medici.

[14] Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena (1470–1520) was made cardinal-deacon of Santa Maria in Pórtico by Leo X in 1513.

[15] Vettori quotes Seneca, *Moral Letters*, 197. Machiavelli disagrees with this kind of fatalism in *Prince*, chapter 25.

Giovanni Machiavelli,[16] to Donato, and to Messer Ciaio. Nothing more. May Christ watch over you.

Franciscus Victorius, ambassador.
The twenty-third day of November, 1513. Rome.

[16] Filippo and Giovanni Machiavelli, both relatives of the author of *The Prince*, were, along with Vettori, the guarantors who pledged to pay 1,000 florins if M left Florentine territory before November 10, 1513. By mentioning them here, Vettori acknowledges their help in what had been a difficult matter that is now concluded.

3

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

Letter to Francesco Vettori

December 10, 1513

Machiavelli's letter to Francesco Vettori of December 10, 1513, in which he announces that he is writing a work On Principalities, *is the most famous private letter in the Western literary tradition. To his friend Vettori, Machiavelli offers an often moving and sometimes humorous account of how he spends his days and evenings on his farm at Sant'Andrea in Percussina, outside of Florence, while also describing his hopes for employment by the Medici family.*

Readers should understand the letter in the context of Machiavelli's lengthy and intense correspondence with Vettori. Machiavelli wrote the description of his days at Sant'Andrea in direct response to Vettori recounting his life in Rome (Document 2). Machiavelli thus did everything he could to highlight the contrast between his friend's situation and his own. There was also a good chance that Vettori would show or read from Machiavelli's letter to other persons in Rome. Possibly Machiavelli hoped that Vettori would pass this highly polished literary creation to

From the transcription in William J. Connell, *Machiavelli nel Rinascimento italiano* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2015), 88–90. Translated from the Italian by William J. Connell.

Giuliano de' Medici himself, who, as the letter declares, is the intended dedicatee of On Principalities.

Although the letter is poignant—it splendidly communicates Machiavelli's feelings of isolation, and his unhappiness at the abrupt termination of his career in government—one should not accept everything in it at face value. To begin with, the reader needs to understand the letter in the context of Machiavelli's material situation in 1513. Machiavelli certainly experienced intense anguish as a consequence of losing his job in November 1512, and of his arrest and torture before his release in March 1513. Machiavelli seems to have been just getting by on the proceeds from his farm, and the Sant'Andrea farm had not been very profitable in the previous generation, as we know from a record book kept by Machiavelli's father, Bernardo.[1] *Still, Machiavelli was fortunate to have a farm to which to retreat during his political difficulties; it meant that he and his family would be provided for.*

Indeed there is a certain exaggeration of Machiavelli's hardships in the letter of December 10.

Although scholars often refer to Machiavelli's time at Sant'Andrea as a period of "exile," this is not quite accurate, inasmuch as Machiavelli was not required to stay at his farm. By the terms of his removal from office, he was allowed to move freely both in the city of Florence and outside, although for one year he was not permitted to enter his former workplace, the Palace of the Signoria, or to leave Florentine territory and by the time the letter was written, both prohibitions had expired. The fact that Machiavelli was going back and forth between his farm and Florence (where he had access to books and libraries, as well as his friends) is demonstrated by the fact that this letter, like all but one of the letters that Machiavelli wrote to Vettori in this period, is signed "In Florence." And even at Sant'Andrea in Percussina, Machiavelli was not nearly so isolated as some have thought, and as his letter at times appears to intimate. Sant'Andrea was only about six and a half kilometers from Florence, which meant that Machiavelli was able to go to and from the city without much difficulty. Perhaps even more important was the situation of his farm at a convenient spot along the principal road, known as the "Royal Roman Road" (strada regia romana), *which connected Florence with Rome. The many ambassadors, messengers, merchants, and pilgrims who traveled between Rome and Florence all*

[1] The country property was studied on the basis of this record book by Ildebrando Imberciadori, "I due poderi di Bernardo Machiavelli, ovvero mezzadria poderale nel '400," in *Studi in onore di Armando Sapori*, 2 vols. (Milan: Cisalpino, 1957), 2: 833–46.

would have passed near Machiavelli's farm, and some would have dined or lodged at the inn, the Albergaccio, which was partly owned by the Machiavelli family. Thus, even at his farm, Machiavelli was able to stay apprised of events in the political world he so sorely missed.[2]

To the magnificent Florentine ambassador to the Highest Pontiff, my patron and benefactor. In Rome.

Magnificent ambassador: "Divine favors were never late."[3] I say this because it appeared to me not that I had lost your favor, but that I had misplaced it, since you had gone a long time without writing to me, and I was worrying how the cause could have arisen. And I took little account of all the causes that came to my mind, except for when I worried that you had refrained from writing to me because it might have been written to you that I was not a good manager of your letters; and yet I knew that, apart from Filippo[4] and Paolo,[5] no others had seen them on my account.

I have had your favor restored with the latest letter of yours of the twenty-third of last month,[6] for which I remain most content, seeing how regularly and calmly you exercise your public office; and I advise you to continue in this way, because I know how whoever abandons his own advantages for the advantages of another, loses his own; while for the advantages conferred he receives no acknowledgment. And since fortune wants to do everything, one should let her do it, stay calm and not give her trouble, and wait for a time when she allows men to act. And then will be the time for you to try harder, to survey matters better, and for me to leave my country house and say "Here I am!" For this reason, since I want to make equal return of your favors, in this letter of mine I cannot tell you anything other than how my life is, and if you judge that it should be traded for yours, I shall be happy to exchange it.

[2] On the manuscript tradition of the letter, see Connell, *Machiavelli nel Rinascimento italiano*, 51–93. M uses *voi* and its forms throughout.

[3] Petrarch, *Triumph of Eternity*, 13, in Francesco Petrarca, *Rime, Trionfi, e poesie latine*, ed. Ferdinando Neri, Guido Martellotti, Enrico Bianchi, and Natalino Sapegno (Milan and Naples: Ricciardi, 1951), 554. In a poem, *Serenade*, M changed only one of the words in this Petrarchan line, writing: "Amorous favors never came late."

[4] Filippo Casavecchia. See Document 1.

[5] Paolo Vettori, Francesco's brother.

[6] Document 2.

I am staying in my country house, and, since those latest accidents of mine happened,[7] I have not been in Florence twenty days counting them all together. Until now I have been hunting thrushes by myself.[8] I would rise before dawn; I would set the basket-traps; then, after that, I would go out with a bundle of cages on my back, so that I looked like Geta when he was returning from the port with the books of Amphitryon;[9] and I would snare at least two and at most six thrushes. And thus I remained all September.[10] Afterward, to my displeasure, this diversion, although unseemly and strange, ended. How my life is now I shall tell you. I rise in the morning with the sun and I go out into a wood of mine that I am having cut, where I stay two hours to review the work of the previous day, and to pass time with those woodcutters, who always have some disaster at hand, either among themselves or with their neighbors. Concerning this wood I could tell you a thousand beautiful things that have befallen me, with both Fruosino da Panzano and with the others who wanted some of this firewood. Fruosino in particular sent for certain cartloads without saying anything to me, and at payment time he wanted to hold back ten lire that he says he has been owed by me for four years, ever since he beat me at *cricca*[11] in the house of Antonio Guicciardini. I began to raise the devil; I wanted to accuse the carter who had gone there to deliver the cartloads as a thief; however Giovanni Machiavelli then intervened and set us in agreement. Then, when that north wind was blowing,[12] Batista Guicciardini, Filippo Ginori, Tommaso del Bene, and certain other citizens, each took a cartload from me. I promised some to each, and I sent one of the cartloads to Tommaso, which was counted in

[7] M refers to his arrest and torture on a charge of conspiring against the Medici rulers of Florence, and to his unexpected release from prison.

[8] According to the terms of a late-fifteenth-century lease on M's farm, the tenants were prohibited from netting birds; Imberciadori, "I due poderi," 839. Presumably the privilege was reserved for the owners. Dante, *Purgatorio*, 23.3–6, criticizes those "who lose their lives chasing small birds," without realizing that "time should be spent more usefully."

[9] The reference is to a popular fifteenth-century verse novella, *Geta and Birria*. Amphitryon, who has returned from studying philosophy in Athens, gives his servant Geta a great load of books to carry. In a humorous passage, Geta, loaded down by the books, attempts to persuade a second servant, Birria, to carry them for him. John M. Najemy, *Between Friends: Discourses of Power and Desire in the Machiavelli Letters of 1513–1515* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 225–30, suggests that M likens himself to Geta, Vettori to Birria, and *The Prince* to the load of books.

[10] This appears to conflict with the phrase "Until now," which appears a few lines earlier. Ridolfi proposed changing this to "November," when the migration of birds through Tuscany comes to an end.

[11] *cricca*: a card game.

[12] Vettori (Document 2) had described his house in Rome as "open to the north wind."

Florence as a half-cartload, because to stack it there were Tommaso, his wife, his servants, and his children, and they looked like Gabburra on a Thursday, when with those apprentices of his, he clubs an ox.[13] The result was that, when I saw to whose profit it was, I told the others that I had no more firewood. And they all made a big point of it, especially Batista, who counts it among the disasters of Prato.[14]

When I have left the wood, I go out to a spring, and from there to a birding site of mine. I have a book under my cloak, either Dante or Petrarch, or one of these minor poets: Tibullus, Ovid and ones like them. I read of those amorous passions of theirs and of their loves, I remember my own, and I delight for a while in these thoughts. Then I put myself on the road to the inn, I speak with those who pass by, I ask for news of their countries, I learn various things, and I note the varying tastes and diverse fantasies of men. Meanwhile the hour for dinner arrives, when with my family I eat of those foods that this poor country house and very small patrimony permit. Once I have eaten, I return to the inn; here is the host, and ordinarily a butcher, a miller and two kiln operators. With these men I loaf about the whole day, playing *cricca* and backgammon and the like, whence arise a thousand disputes and infinite insults with injurious words. Most of the time a *quattrino*[15] is being fought over, and nonetheless our shouting is heard all the way to San Casciano.[16] In this way, folded up with these lice, I shake the mold from my brain, and I vent the malignity of this fate of mine, since I am glad that she should trample me in this way in order that I may test whether she feels any shame about it.

When evening comes, I return home, and I enter into my study; and at the door I take off my everyday dress, full of mud and of clay, and I put on regal and courtly clothes; and decently dressed I enter into the ancient courts of ancient men, where, received lovingly by them, I eat the food that is mine alone, and for which I was born. There I am not ashamed to

[13] "Gabburra" was a butcher who lived near the homes of M and Vettori. Typically a butcher and his assistants would club the legs of an ox to bring it to a kneeling position for slaughtering. The image M means to convey is of a team of people swinging clubs. He suggests that Tommaso and his family beat down the firewood in order to turn their full cartload of wood into half a cartload.

[14] Battista di Braccio Guicciardini was *podestà* (governor) and commissioner of Prato when the Spanish troops in a papal army sacked the city on August 29, 1512. With the city lost, Battista attempted to flee, but was captured and put in irons by the Spanish, who put a ransom of 1,000 florins on his head; see Francesco Guicciardini, *Le lettere*, ed. Pierre Jodogne, 10 vols. (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per l'Età Moderna e Contemporanea, 1986–2010), 1: 226.

[15] *quattrino*: a coin of small worth, like a penny.

[16] A town approximately five kilometers to the south on the road to Rome.

speak with them, and to ask them the reasons for their actions; and they, in their humanity, answer me. And for four hours at a time I feel no boredom. I forget all trouble, I do not fear poverty, death does not frighten me. I enter their company entirely. And because Dante says that what has been learned does not become knowledge unless it is retained,[17] I have noted down what capital I have earned in my conversation with them, and composed a small work *On Principalities*, in which I immerse myself as much as I can in the cogitations concerning this subject, discussing what a principality is, of what kinds they are, how they are acquired, how they are maintained, why they are lost. And if ever any caprice of mine did please you, this one should not displease you, while for a prince, and especially for a new prince, it should be welcome. For this reason I am addressing it to the magnificence of Giuliano.[18] Filippo Casavecchia has seen it; he will be able to inform you in part of both the thing in itself and the reasonings that I have had with him, although I am still adding to it and cleaning it.

You would like, magnificent Ambassador, that I should leave this life and come to enjoy yours with you. I shall do it anyhow, but what tempts me now is that I shall have completed certain affairs of mine within six weeks. What makes me remain doubtful is that those Soderini are there,[19] since I would be forced, if I come there, to visit and to speak with them. I would worry that on my return I could not be sure of dismounting at home as opposed to the Bargello,[20] because although this state has the greatest foundations and great security, nevertheless it is new, and for this reason suspicious, nor is there a lack of wiseacres who, to appear like Paolo Bertini, would turn others into boarders[21] and would leave the reckoning to me. So I beg you to banish this fear of mine, and then, anyhow, I shall come to find you within the stated time.

I have reasoned with Filippo about this small work of mine, and whether it were better to give it or not to give it; and if it were better to give it, whether it were better that I should bring it, or that I should send it to you. What has been telling me not to give it was the worry that it would

[17] Dante, *Paradiso*, 5.41–42.

[18] Giuliano de' Medici (1479–1516) was the brother of Pope Leo X.

[19] Pier Soderini, the former Florentine head of state, and his brother, Cardinal Francesco Soderini, were not viewed favorably by the Medici, but they had been close associates and patrons of Machiavelli until 1512, and he would have felt obligated to call upon them.

[20] The Florentine Palace of Justice, where criminals were tried.

[21] In other words, into prisoners.

not be read by Giuliano, but by someone else, and that this Ardinghelli[22] would win the honor of this latest labor of mine. What has been telling me to give it is the necessity that hounds me, because I am consuming myself, and I cannot stay this way for a long time lest through poverty I become contemptible; and, further, my desire that these Medici lords might begin to make use of me, even if they begin by having me roll a stone;[23] because, if afterward I did not win them over to me, I could blame only myself. And, as for this thing, once it were read, it would be seen that the fifteen years I spent studying[24] the art of the state were neither slept through nor gambled away; and everyone should hold it dear to be able to employ one who has become fully experienced at the expense of others. And of my faith there should be no doubt, because, having always observed faith, I could not learn now how to break it; and whoever has been faithful and good for forty-three years,[25] as I have, is unable to change his nature; and to my faith and goodness my poverty stands witness.

I would therefore desire that you write me what you too think about this matter, and to you I commend myself. Be happy.

10 December 1513.
Niccolò Machiavelli. In Florence.

[22] Pietro Ardinghelli, also mentioned in Document 2. Machiavelli is afraid that Ardinghelli will plagiarize *The Prince*. See also p. 16 above.

[23] Like Sisyphus.

[24] Literally, "at university in."

[25] Machiavelli was forty-four at the time of the letter, but he was forty-three when he lost his job in 1512.

4

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

The Thrushes

1513

It has been argued that Machiavelli wrote the following poem as a dedicatory sonnet to accompany The Prince, *the first version of which Machiavelli wrote for Giuliano de' Medici,*[1] *as we know from his letter to Vettori of December 10, 1513 (Document 3). The poem announces a gift of thrushes Machiavelli sent to Giuliano. Sending birds from the country (to be eaten as delicacies) was a common way of paying homage, winning favor, or expressing thanks in Renaissance Italy.*[2] *But since these thrushes, as Machiavelli describes them, are "neither good nor fat at all," it is quite plausible that they are a conceit for* The Prince, *the work that Machiavelli hoped would redeem his reputation and stop the men around Giuliano from "rending" his "name and right."*

I'm sending you, Giuliano, if I might,
Several thrushes—a small gift, I guess,
But good to make your lordship think a bit
Of your poor Machiavello in distress.

And if you have around you men who bite,
Into their throats you may soon force all this,
So that, while eating of these birds, who knows!
They may stop rending some man's name and right.

[1] Hugo Jaeckl, "I 'tordi' e il 'principe nuovo.' Note sulle dediche del 'Principe' di Machiavelli a Giuliano e a Lorenzo de' Medici," *Archivio storico italiano*, 156 (1998), 73–92. The argument is endorsed and finds further support in Riccardo Fubini, "Postilla ai 'Tordi'," ibid., 93ff.

[2] Thus Roberto Ridolfi, *Vita di Niccolò Machiavelli*, 7th rev. ed. (Florence: Sansoni, 1978), 507 n. 25, argued that the poem really did accompany a gift of thrushes.

Niccolò Machiavelli, *Lust and Liberty: The Poems of Machiavelli*, trans. Joseph Tusiani (New York: Obolensky, 1963), 46.

But you will say: "How can these birds achieve
All this, being neither good nor fat at all?
Of touching them my men would not conceive."

Then let me tell you this: As they recall,
I am too thin, yet of my flesh they leave
No inch untried by their teeth's hungry fall.

Oh, answer not the call
Of empty words, my Lord; and judge and see,
Not with your eyes but with your hands, my plea.